

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A cart return system, comprising:
a sensor which is activated when a cart is returned to a cart corral;
a plurality of customer identification signals which are manually entered
5 at the cart corral or wirelessly transmitted from a customer device; and
a data processing section receiving signals from the sensor and the
customer input signals so as to associate the returned cart with a customer
identification for a customer rewards program.

10 2. A cart return system, comprising:
a sensor which is activated when a cart is returned to a cart corral;
a first interface which receives a first set of identification signals from a
customer;
a second interface which receives a second set of customer identification
15 signals from the customer; and
a data processing section associating at least one set of customer
identification signals with a cart returned signal received from the sensor for a
customer rewards program.

20 3. The system defined in Claim 2, wherein the data processing section
receives both the first and second sets of signals from the customer.

25 4. The system defined in Claim 2, wherein the data processing section only
receives the second set of signals due to a failure of the first interface.

5. A cart return system for use by a store, the system comprising:
a detection loop arranged at the entrance to a cart return location;
a cart detection circuit connected to the detection loop being configured
for detecting a change of inductance of the loop and identifying a cart detected
30 condition; and

a processing circuit, connected to the cart detection circuit, being configured for identifying a cart return condition in response to the cart detected condition, wherein the processing circuit is configured to receive a customer identification.

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6. The system defined in Claim 5, wherein the cart detection circuit includes a loop oscillator circuit connected to the detection loop.

7. The cart return system defined in Claim 6, wherein the cart detection circuit includes a control circuit detecting a change in inductance of the loop so as to specify the cart detected condition in response to the loop oscillator circuit.

8. The system defined in Claim 5, additionally comprising an output interface connected to the processing circuit, wherein the processing circuit generates an output signal for the output interface based on the cart return condition and the customer identification.

9. The system defined in Claim 8, wherein the output signal is indicative of a reward for a customer of the store.

10. The system defined in Claim 8, wherein the output interface provides a reward to a customer of the store.

11. The system defined in Claim 5, wherein the processing circuit includes a customer identification interface that provides the customer identification responsive to the cart return condition.

12. The system defined in Claim 11, wherein the customer identification interface is a keypad.

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13. The system defined in Claim 11, wherein the customer identification interface is a smart card reader.

5 14. The system defined in Claim 11, wherein the customer identification interface comprises a wireless transceiver.

15. The system defined in Claim 11, wherein the customer identification interface comprises a biometrics subsystem.

10 16. The system defined in Claim 5, wherein the customer identification corresponds to a customer who returns a shopping cart to the cart return location.